Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. 07-1474

In The

Supreme Court of the United States

RAFAL PIETRZAK,
Petitioner,

v.

NATHANIEL QUARTERMAN, Director,
Texas Department of Criminal Justice,
Correctional Institutions Division,
Respondent.

On Petition For Writ of Certiorari to the
United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

RESPONDENT'S BRIEF IN OPPOSITION

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Under the Fifth Circuit's reasoning in *Salinas v. Dretke*, an out-of-time appeal granted through a state's collateral proceedings tolls AEDPA's one-year limitations period under 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(2), but does not restart that limitations period under 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(1)(A). Applying *Salinas*, the District Court dismissed Pietrzak's federal habeas petition as untimely. Should a certificate of appealability ("COA") have issued to review this precedent where Pietrzak failed to address the validity of the claims stated in his petition and failed to seek *en banc* rehearing of the COA denial?

2. Under Fifth Circuit precedent, AEDPA's statute of limitations is subject to equitable tolling. The District Court found that Pietrzak had not shown "rare and exceptional" circumstances warranting equitable tolling, and dismissed his petition as untimely. Should a COA have issued to review the District Court's factual findings and application of equitable-tolling principles where Pietrzak failed to address the validity of the claims stated in his petition and failed to demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find the District Court's ruling debatable?

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BRIEF IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Respondent, Nathaniel Quarterman, Director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Correctional Institutions Division, ("the Director"), respectfully files this brief in opposition to the petition for writ of certiorari filed by Rafal Pietrzak ("Pietrzak").

JURISDICTION

This Court has jurisdiction under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1). *Hohn v. United States*, 524 U.S. 236, 240 (1998).

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

I. State court proceedings.

Pietrzak was convicted by a jury of aggravated sexual assault of a child and sentenced to thirty years of confinement in the Correctional Institutions Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, on March 3, 1998, in the 380th Judicial District Court in Collin County, Texas, in cause number 380-80392-97, styled *The State of Texas v. Rafal Pietrzak*. 4 CR 650-52.[1] Pietrzak filed a motion for new trial on April 2, 1998. 4 CR 664. Pietrzak did not file a notice of appeal by June 1, 1998, as required under Texas law to perfect his direct appeal. Tex. R. App. P. 26.2(a)(2)(West 1998)(Where a timely motion for new trial is filed, the defendant must

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[1] "CR" refers to the Clerk's Record on appeal preceded by volume number and followed by the relevant page numbers.

file notice of appeal within ninety days after the date sentence is imposed to perfect appeal.).

Pietrzak filed a notice of appeal on June 2, 1998. 4 CR 698. The Court of Appeals for the Fifth Judicial District of Texas requested briefing on the threshold issue of jurisdiction on October 26, 1999, noting that it appeared the notice of appeal had been filed a day late and that no motion to extend time had been filed with the court. *Pietrzak v. State*, NO. 05-98-01016-CR, Letter from Court. The court ultimately entered an order dismissing the appeal for lack of jurisdiction explaining that Pietrzak's counsel had filed the notice of appeal one day too late. *Pietrzak v. State*, No. 05-98-01016-CR, slip op., 2000 WL 2679 (Tex. App. – Dallas, Jan. 4, 2000, pet. ref'd)(unpublished).

Pietrzak challenged this dismissal in the Court of Criminal Appeals through a Petition for Discretionary Review ("PDR"). The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted him an extension of time to file a PDR, but ultimately refused the timely-filed petition on June 7, 2000. *Pietrzak v. State*, No. PD-0795-00 (Tex. Crim. App. June 7, 2000)(unpublished).

Almost a year later, on May 17, 2001, Pieterzak filed a state habeas application alleging, in part, ineffective assistance of counsel based on the untimely filing of his notice of appeal resulting in the dismissal of his direct appeal. *Ex parte Pietrzak*, Application No. 49,639-01 ("SHCR-01") at 3. The Court of Criminal Appeals granted relief on that claim, allowing him an opportunity to file an out-of-time appeal, and dismissed the remaining claims without prejudice. *Ex parte*

Pietrzak, No. 74, 173, slip op. (Tex. Crim. App. Sept. 19, 2001)(unpublished).

Pietrzak timely filed his notice of out-of-time appeal according to the provisions set out in the court's order granting relief and pursued his out-of-time appeal. On January 23, 2003, the Fifth District Court of Appeals affirmed Pietrzak's conviction and sentence under the new cause number assigned to his out-of-time appeal. *Pietrzak v. State*, No. 05-01-1687-CR, slip op., 2002 WL 31957883 (Tex. App.– Dallas Jan. 23, 2003, no pet.)(unpublished). The court granted Pietrzak an extension of time to March 7, 2003, to file a motion for rehearing. Pietrzak did not file a motion for rehearing or a PDR.

On August 14, 2003, almost six months after the court of appeals issued its decision, Pietrzak filed a second state habeas application challenging his conviction. *Ex parte Pietrzak*, Application No. 49,639-02 ("SHCR-02") at index. The Court of Criminal Appeals denied relief on November 23, 2004. SHCR-02 at cover.

On May 5, 2005, almost six months after his second application was denied, Pietrzak filed a third state habeas application challenging his conviction. *Ex parte Pieterzak*, Application No. 49,639-03 ("SHCR-03") at index. The Court of Criminal Appeals denied relief on the claims raised in that application on November 23, 2005. SHCR-03 at cover. This Court denied Pietrzak's petition seeking certiorari review of that denial on October 2, 2006. *Pietrzak v. Texas*, 127 S. Ct. 38 (2006)(mem. op.).

II. Federal court proceedings.

Pietrzak filed his federal habeas petition on May 6, 2005. District Court Docket Entry ("D.E.") 1. The petition did not address the limitations issue. *Id.* The Director was ordered to file a response. D.E. 3. The Director filed a motion to dismiss the petition as time-barred. D.E. 8. Pietrzak did not file a response to the motion. The Magistrate Judge entered findings and recommended that the petition should be dismissed as untimely, relying in part on *Salinas v. Dretke*, 354 F.3d 425 (5th Cir. 2004). D.E. 9. Pietrzak filed objections to the Magistrate Judge's recommendation, arguing that *Salinas* was wrongly decided or did not apply and, in the alternative, that he was entitled to equitable tolling. D.E. 14. The District Court, also relying in part on *Salinas*, entered its order and final judgment on October 16, 2006, dismissing the case with prejudice as untimely. D.E. 15, 16.

Pietrzak filed notice of appeal on November 14, 2006, which the District Court construed as a motion for a COA and denied as such. D.E. 17, 18. On May 24, 2007, Pietrzak filed his application for a COA in the Fifth Circuit. COA Appl. The Fifth Circuit denied the motion on February 19, 2008. *Pietrzak v. Quarterman*, No. 06-41646. The Court determined that Pietrzak had failed to show that reasonable jurists would find the District Court's procedural ruling debatable or wrong. *Id.* Pietrzak did not request en banc rehearing of this denial.

Pietrzak filed his petition for a writ of certiorari from the Fifth Circuit's denial on February 19, 2008. The Court requested this response.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Certiorari should be denied for the following reasons. The Fifth Circuit correctly denied a COA where Pietrzak failed to meet his burden of making a substantial showing that his petition stated a valid claim of the denial of a constitutional right.

Specifically, certiorari should be denied regarding the first question presented because the Fifth Circuit's denial of a COA was correct where Pietrzak failed to raise an issue that would be debatable under established Circuit precedent and failed to file a motion for *en banc* rehearing of the denial. Alternatively, certiorari should be denied because the Fifth Circuit's resolution of the question is correct—the granting of an out-of-time appeal as relief through habeas proceedings does not restart the limitations period under § 2244(d)(1)(A). The Fifth Circuit's interpretation promotes the purposes of AEDPA's statute of limitations, is consistent with principles of statutory construction, and is supported by a consensus among many other Circuits. Moreover, there is no compelling reason to grant review of the issue in this case when it is currently under review by the Court in *Jimenez v. Quarterman*, No. 07-6984 (March 17, 2008), and will be resolved by the Court's decision in that case.

Certiorari should also be denied regarding the second question presented. Under Fifth Circuit precedent, equitable tolling is already presumed to apply to AEDPA's limitations period. Therefore, determining such applicability would not result in relief. Further, Pietrzak has not shown that the denial of equitable tolling under the circumstances in his case was debatable or that it conflicts with precedent from this Court, the

Fifth Circuit, or other Circuit courts. Moreover, the District Court's denial of equitable tolling was correct where Pietrzak was neither diligent in pursing his federal habeas relief nor prevented from doing so in a timely manner. The issue is fact-bound and would not have broad applicability.

For all these reasons, Pietrzak's petition for certiorari review should be denied.

ARGUMENT

Rule 10 of this Court provides that review on writ of certiorari is not a matter of right, but of judicial discretion, and will be granted only when there are compelling reasons therefore. As demonstrated below, there is no compelling reason for this Court to exercise its discretion to grant review of this case. Accordingly, certiorari review should be denied.

I. Because Pietrzak did not even attempt to make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right, the court correctly denied his COA request, and Pietrzak's petition for certiorari review should be denied.

Under AEDPA, a COA may not issue unless "the applicant has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). The federal District Court dismissed Pietrzak's habeas petition because it found the petition was filed outside AEDPA's one-year limitations period. DE 15, 16. This was a procedural disposition. Determining whether a COA should issue where the petition was dismissed on procedural grounds has two components. *Slack v.*

McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484-85 (2000). One component is "directed at the underlying constitutional claims" and the other is "directed at the District Court's procedural holding." *Id.* at 485.

This Court has stressed that failure to show both components is fatal to a petitioner's COA application:

> Section 2253 mandates that both showings be made before the court of appeals may entertain the appeal. Each component . . . is part of a threshold inquiry. A court may find that it can dispose of the application in a fair and prompt manner if it proceeds first to resolve the issue whose answer is more apparent from the record and arguments.

Slack, 529 U.S. at 484-85.

Accordingly, to obtain a COA from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, Pietrzak was required to make a substantial showing as to both components. To make a substantial showing, "[a] petitioner must show that reasonable jurists could debate whether (or, for that matter, agree that) the petition should have been resolved in a different manner or that the issues presented were 'adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.'" *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 336 (2003)(quoting *Barefoot v. Estelle*, 463 U.S. 880, 893 n.4 (1983)). Therefore, Pietrzak had to show both "that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the petition states a valid claim of the denial of a constitutional right and that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the District Court was correct in its procedural ruling." *See Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484.

Although this "threshold inquiry does not require full consideration of the factual or legal bases adduced in support of the claims[,]" it does require "an overview of the claims in the habeas petition and a general assessment of their merits." *Miller-El*, 537 U.S. at 336. This means that "[a] prisoner seeking a COA must prove 'something more than the absence of frivolity' or the existence of mere 'good faith' on his or her part." *Id.* at 338 (quoting *Barefoot*, 463 U.S. at 893).

In *Miller-El*, resolution of the petitioner's COA application required a preliminary consideration of the factual allegations presented and the three-step framework mandated by *Batson* as necessary to proving and obtaining relief on a *Batson* claim. *See Miller-El*, 537 U.S. at 238-341 (addressing claim raised under *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986)). In this case, it would at least require preliminary consideration of the elements required and the facts alleged to prove each of the specific claims Pietrzak had raised.

In his application for a COA, Pietrzak presented no argument that reasonable jurists would find it debatable whether his petition stated a valid claim for federal habeas relief. *See generally* COA Appl. Rather, Pietrzak merely listed the substantive claims that he had asserted in his federal habeas petition. *Id.* at 6-9 (listing his consular relations, ineffective assistance, and due process claims). After stating the standard required for obtaining a COA, including this Court's note in *Miller-El* that the "threshold inquiry does not require full consideration of the factual or legal bases adduced in support of the claims," Pietrzak declined to provide *any* argument whatsoever to satisfy the showing that reasonable jurists would find it debatable whether the petition stated a

valid claim. *Id.*, at 9-16. Pietrzak's application for a COA did not provide sufficient information to allow the Fifth Circuit to even preliminarily assess the elements and facts of his claims. Thus, the Fifth Circuit had no basis to conclude that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether he had stated a valid claim. Under Fifth Circuit precedent, Pietrzak waived the issue by failing to brief it. *See Lookingbill v. Cockrell*, 293 F.3d 256, 263 (5th Cir. 2002) (citing *Lockett v. Anderson*, 230 F.3d 695, 711 n.27 (5th Cir. 2000)("Where a habeas petitioner fails to brief an argument adequately, we consider it waived.")).

Although the Fifth Circuit did not specifically address this prong of *Slack* in denying a COA, other than to note that Pietrzak had argued what his substantive claims were, Pietrzak's failure to even allege the debatability of the merit of his claims, and thus his failure to make a substantial showing that his petition stated a valid claim of the denial of a constitutional right, was fatal to his motion for a COA. *See* COA Order at 1-2. Because he failed to satisfy this prong of *Slack*, a COA should not have issued to review the District Court's procedural ruling. For this reason alone, Pietrzak's petition for certiorari review should be denied.

II. Certiorari review should be denied on the first question presented. The Fifth Circuit did not err in denying a COA where Pietrzak's federal habeas petition was untimely under the Fifth Circuit's correctly-decided precedent and Pietrzak did not seek en banc rehearing of the denial.

Pietrzak seeks review of the Fifth Circuit's denial of a COA to review whether a State's provision of habeas relief by way of an out-of-time appeal restarts— under §

2244(d)(1)(A)— AEDPA's one-year limitations period. Pet. Cert. at 11.[2] Certiorari review should be denied on this issue. The Fifth Circuit appropriately denied a COA where Pietrzak's federal petition was untimely under Circuit precedent and he failed to seek *en banc* rehearing of denial. Additionally, the Fifth Circuit's holding in *Salinas* is correct– state habeas relief in the form of out-of-time appellate proceedings does not restart AEDPA's limitations period under § 2244(d)(1)(A), is correct. Therefore, there is no compelling reason for this Court to grant certiorari review of this issue in this case where resolution of the issue will not lead to a different result.

A. Pietrzak's federal habeas petition was time-barred under established Circuit precedent

Under established Fifth Circuit precedent, Pietrzak's federal habeas petition was barred by AEDPA's statute of limitations. AEDPA provides:

> (d)(1) A 1-year period of limitation shall apply to an application for a writ of habeas corpus by a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court. The limitation period shall run from the latest of–
>
> > (A) the date on which the judgment became final by the

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[2] This Court granted certiorari review of the same issue in *Jimenez v. Quarterman*. The Court's decision in Jimenez may be dispositive of this issue. Therefore, there is no reason to grant certiorari review of the issue in this case.

conclusion of direct review or the expiration of the time for seeking such review;

(B) the date on which the impediment to filing an application created by State action in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States is removed, if the applicant was prevented from filing by such State action;

(C) the date on which the constitutional right asserted was initially recognized by the Supreme Court, if the right has been newly recognized by the Supreme Court and made retroactively applicable to cases on collateral review; or

(D) the date on which the factual predicate of the claim or claims presented could have been discovered through the exercise of due diligence.

(2) The time during which a properly filed application for State post-conviction or other collateral review with respect to the pertinent judgment or claim is pending shall not be counted toward any period of limitation under this subsection.

28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(West 2008).

Pietrzak's judgment of conviction was entered and sentence imposed on March 3, 1998. 1 CR 4 (docket sheet); 4 CR 659 (judgment); 8 RR[3] 1, 36-37 (reporter's record reflecting sentence being imposed); 4 CR 664 (motion for new trial). He timely filed a motion for new trial on April 2, 1998. Tex. R. App. P. 21.4 (West 1998). Pietrzak's notice of appeal was therefore due by June 1, 1998, ninety days after the date his sentence was imposed or suspended. Tex. R. App. P. 26.2(2)(West 1998). Pietrzak's notice of appeal, however, was not filed by counsel until June 2, 1998. 4 CR 698, 700. Pietrzak did not file a motion to extend the time for filing his notice of appeal as provided by Texas Rule of Appellate Procedure 26.3, which allowed for such extension if filed within fifteen days after the deadline for filing the notice of appeal. Tex. R. App. P. 26.3 (West 1998). Pietrzak's conviction became final under § 2244(d)(1)(A) on June 1, 1998, when the time for seeking direct review of his conviction expired, and his one-year limitations period began to run on that date.

On October 26, 1999, after Pietrzak had filed his initial Appellant's brief, the intermediate court of appeals sent a letter to the parties requesting briefing on the threshold issue of jurisdiction. *Pietrzak v. Texas*, No. 05-98-01016-CR, Letter from Court. The court stated that the record reflected that sentence was imposed on March 3, 1998, and that the notice of appeal was due on June 1,

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[3] "RR" refers to the Reporter's Record in this case, preceded by the volume number and followed by the relevant page number(s).

1998, but was not filed until June 2, 1998, and that no extension motion had been filed. *Id.* The parties briefed the issue. Pietrzak's counsel was unable to provide any argument that the notice of appeal was timely. Instead, counsel set forth the law and the facts, recognizing the court's inability to suspend the operation of the rules in order to extend the time limit for filing notice of appeal and that, absent a timely-filed notice of appeal, the court of appeals lacked jurisdiction over the appeal. *Pietrzak v. Texas*, No. 05-98-01016-CR, Appellant's Brief at 1-4, citing *Slaton v. State*, 981 S.W.2d 208 (Tex. Crim. App. 1998)(Rule allowing appellate court to suspend operation of rules in particular cases does not allow court to extend jurisdictional time limit for filing notice of appeal). The intermediate court of appeals dismissed Pietrzak's appeal for lack of jurisdiction on January 4, 2000. *Pietrzak v. State*, slip op.

Pietrzak chose to challenge this dismissal in the Court of Criminal Appeals through a Petition for Discretionary Review ("PDR"). The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted him an extension of time to file a PDR, but ultimately refused the timely-filed petition on June 7, 2000. *Pietrzak v. State*, No. PD-0795-00 (Tex. Crim. App. June 7, 2000)(unpublished).

Although Pietrzak filed a notice of appeal resulting in state court proceedings, because the time for seeking direct review of his conviction had expired on June 1, 1998, without a timely notice being filed, and because that time was not extended by the court of appeals, Pietrzak's AEDPA limitations period began to run on June 2, 1998.[4] 28 U.S.C. §2244(d)(1)(A); *See*

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[4] The Magistrate Judge concluded, without citation to any authority, that Pietrzak's AEDPA limitations period did not

Roberts v. Cockrell, 319 F.3d at 694 (if defendant stops appeal process before obtaining ruling from state court of last resort, conviction becomes final when time for seeking further direct review in state court expires); *compare Foreman v. Dretke*, 383 F.3d at 340 (limitations period began to run after PDR was denied because *both* intermediate appeal and PDR were timely filed). The proceedings that resulted from Pietrzak's filing of an untimely notice of appeal was not direct review of the conviction as referred to in § 2244(d)(1)(A), because the time for seeking such review had already expired. Nor was it collateral review of the conviction as contemplated for tolling under § 2244(d)(2). The state courts concluded that the late-filed notice of appeal did not invoke the court's jurisdiction to review Pietrzak's conviction.

Pietrzak's AEDPA limitations period expired on June 2, 1999. There were no collateral proceedings pending between June 2, 1998, and June 2, 1999, to toll

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begin to run until the intermediate appellate court had dismissed his untimely appeal for lack of jurisdiction. D.E. 9 at 2. The District Court concluded that Pietrzak's attempt to pursue an untimely appeal, and the Court of Criminal Appeals granting Pietrzak a motion to extend time to file a PDR, constituted direct appeal and found that Pietrzak's limitations period did not begin until ninety days after his PDR was refused. Pet. Cert., App. 6-7. Under Fifth Circuit precedent, both of these conclusions were clearly erroneous. *See Roberts v. Cockrell*, 319 F.3d 690, 694 (5th Cir. 2003); *compare Foreman v. Dretke*, 383 F.3d 336, 340 (5th Cir. 2004). However, even under the District Court's erroneous calculations, Pietrzak's federal petition was untimely. The District Court concluded that Pietrzak's limitations period began to run on September 5, 2000, was tolled for 648 days during the pendency of his first state habeas and out-of-time appeal proceedings, and expired without further tolling on June 16, 2003, two months before he filed his second state habeas application, and almost two years before he filed his federal petition. Pet. Cert., App. 7-8.

Pietrzak's limitations period under § 2244(d)(2). The state habeas and out-of-time appeal proceedings that Pietrzak pursued were commenced too late to toll the limitations period. *See Scott v. Johnson*, 227 F.3d 260, 263 (5th Cir. 2000) (stating that where the state habeas application is not filed until after federal limitation period has run, filing does not toll limitation period under § 2244(d)(2)). Nor did Pietrzak argue in the courts below that any[5] of his claims were subject to a later start date under Sections 2244(d)(1)(B), (C), or (D). The lower courts determined that no other provision of § 2244(d) or equitable tolling applied to Pietrzak's claims. D.E. 9 at 3; D.E. 15.

B. Because Circuit precedent established that Pietrzak's claims were time-barred, and he did not seek *en banc* rehearing of the denial, his petition should be denied.

Pietrzak argued to the District Court that because he was granted permission to file an out-of-time appeal pursuant to his first state writ application, his conviction became final for limitations purposes at the conclusion of the out-of-time appeal process, in February 2003. D.E. 14 at 5-6. He made the same argument in his application for a COA. COA Appl. at 11-12.

The District Court recognized that circuit precedent foreclosed this argument. Pet. Cert., App. 6.

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[5] Pietrzak did argue that § 2244(d)(1)(C) applied to his claims pertaining to the Vienna Convention; however, he has now waived those claims. Pet. Cert. at 9 n. 8. In referring to Pietrzak's claims, the Director does not include the waived claims unless otherwise stated.

Salinas established that remedies derived from collateral review, like an out-of-time appeal, toll AEDPA's limitations period under § 2244(d)(2) but do not "restart" the period under § 2244(d)(1)(A). *Salinas*, 354 F.3d at 430. Thus, the District Court dismissed Pietrzak's petition and denied his COA application. The Fifth Circuit agreed.

These decisions applied the settled principle that circuit precedent binds district courts and circuit panels. *E.g.*, *Campbell v. Sonat Offshore Drilling, Inc.*, 979 F.2d 1115, 1121 (5th Cir. 1992); *United States v. Torres*, 115 F.3d 1033, 1036 (D.C. Cir. 1997). That is, although the COA standard asks whether the procedural ruling is "debatable among jurists of reason," *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484, it is not "debatable" that district and circuit courts must follow circuit precedent in reviewing COA applications. *E.g.*, *Gordon v. Sec'y, Dept. of Corr.*, 479 F.3d 1299, 1300 (11th Cir. 2007) ("If the petitioner's contention about the procedural ruling against him is foreclosed by a binding decision . . . the attempted appeal does not present a substantial question, because reasonable jurists will follow controlling law."); *Rowell v. Dretke*, 398 F.3d 370, 378 (5th Cir. 2005) ("[R]easonable jurists would not be able to debate whether this issue should have been resolved in a different manner by the district court [because] . . . . [c]ircuit precedent has specifically rejected the argument . . . .").

Binding precedent does not foreclose a circuit court from reconsidering that precedent's resolution of issues posed in a COA application because the court can always revisit that precedent through en banc rehearing of a COA denial. *E.g.*, *Gonzalez v. Sec'y, Dep't of Corr.*, 366 F.3d 1253, 1260, 1262 (11th Cir. 2004) (en banc) (granting rehearing en banc to address two panels' COA

denials); *Soffar v. Cockrell*, 300 F.3d 588, 590 & n.1 (5th Cir. 2002) (en banc) (after en banc review, reinstating panel's COA grants and denials); *see also Santiago Salgado v. Garcia*, 384 F.3d 769, 775 (9th Cir. 2004) (explaining that inmates denied COA may seek rehearing en banc); *Thomas v. United States*, 328 F.3d 305, 308 (7th Cir. 2003) (noting that "[o]ccasionally the denial of a request for a COA will present the sort of legal question that justifies rehearing en banc"). Pietrzak, however, did not seek rehearing en banc of his COA denial.

Although Pietrzak argued to both the District Court and the Fifth Circuit, as he does in his petition to this Court, that *Salinas* was distinguishable from his case and therefore did not control, both courts implicitly rejected the debatability of this argument. D.E. 14 at 6; Pet. Cert., App. 6; COA Appl. at 12-13. Pietrzak failed to adequately brief this argument in his application for a COA and did not demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find it debatable whether *Salinas* controlled in his case. His argument failed to cite authority, highlighted irrelevant factual distinctions, mis-stated the legal significance of the facts under state law, and presented no argument as to why the legal reasoning in *Salinas* would not apply to such facts.

First, he waived this argument by failing to properly brief it. He failed to cite to the record or authority, and failed to cite to any legal decisions that might indicate that reasonable jurists would find the issue debatable. *See United States v. Ogle*, 415 F.3d 382, 383-84 (5th Cir. 2005) (argument not raised in appellant brief as required by Fed. R. App. P. 28 is waived); *see also* FED. R. APP. P. 28(a)(4) (appellant argument must contain

reasons he deserves requested relief, with citation to authorities, statutes and record).

Further, Pietrzak's argument focused on facts that were irrelevant to the reasoning in *Salinas*. In *Salinas*, the Fifth Circuit determined that AEDPA's limitations period did not provide for multiple start dates; that the out-of-time PDR was obtained, and could only be obtained, through collateral proceedings; and that such proceedings were necessarily the product of collateral review and therefore did not constitute direct review proceedings under § 2244(d)(1)(A). *See Salinas*, 354 F.3d at 429, 431. Pietrzak argued that he had been granted an out-of-time appeal as opposed to an out-of-time PDR, and that the date his sentence was imposed had therefore been changed, as a matter of law. COA Appl. at 12-13.

As an initial matter, Pietrzak's argument mischaracterized the state court's order. It did not "effectively, as a matter of law, chang[e] the date upon which sentence was imposed. . . [;]" rather, it instructed how the deadlines for his out-of-time appeal should be calculated under the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure. *See* COA Appl. at 13.

Further, the import of his argument may have been that under his interpretation, the time for pursuing direct appeal had never expired. However, this same reasoning would have applied to an out-of-time PDR where the time for filing a PDR under the Rules of Appellate Procedure was calculated as if the court of appeals's opinion had been issued the date the state court's mandate granting the relief was issued. Therefore, Pietrzak argued a factual distinction without

a legally relevant difference for a proposition that had already been rejected by the Fifth Circuit in *Salinas*.

Furthermore, a COA had already been denied in another case where an out-of-time appeal had been granted and *Salinas* had been applied to find the federal habeas petition untimely. *See Jimenez v. Quarterman*, No. 06-11240 (5th Cir. May 31, 2007, denied coa). Therefore, the application of *Salinas* to out-of-time appeals had already been tacitly determined by the Fifth Circuit and it would have been necessary to seek *en banc* rehearing of this issue as well.

In his COA application, Pietrzak failed to properly brief and failed to demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find it debatable that *Salinas* controlled where Texas courts granted an out-of-time appeal as habeas relief. Because the District Court correctly applied binding circuit precedent to dismiss Pietrzak's claims, "a reasonable jurist could not conclude either that the district court erred in dismissing the petition," *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484, or that a COA should issue.

C. Because the Court of Appeals correctly determined that the granting of an out-of-time appeal does not restart the limitations period under § 2244(d)(1)(A), but rather continues to toll under § 2244(d)(2) until such proceedings are completed, certiorari review should be denied.

The Fifth Circuit's interpretation of § 2244(d) is consistent with the principles of statutory construction and promotes the purposes of AEDPA's statute of limitations: comity, finality, and federalism. *See Duncan*

v. Walker, 533 U.S. 167, 178 (2001)(purpose of AEDPA statute of limitations is to "further the principles of comity, finality, and federalism"). Several other Circuits have reached the same correct conclusion.[6]

The text of § 2244(d)(1)(A) does not allow for multiple finality dates for state-court judgements. *See Teas v. Endicott*, 494 F.3d 580, 581 (7th Cir. 2007). Nor does it contemplate a situation in which both expiration and completion occur in the same case or in which the time for pursuing direct review expires multiple times. It defines *the* date by which the conviction shall be deemed final for the purposes of AEDPA limitations.

Finality, for purposes of § 2244(d)(1)(A), does not rely on state law defining when a judgment is final or whether various state court proceedings function like direct appeal. This would defeat Congress's intent in defining finality in § 2244(d)(1)(A) to establish a uniform federal rule for limitations, because the state practices regarding what relief is available for ineffective assistance of counsel on appeal and how such relief may be sought vary greatly. *Clay v. United States*, 537 U.S. 522, 531 (2003).

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[6] *See Lopez v. Wilson*, 426 F.3d 339, 341-49 (6th Cir. 2005)(*en banc, per curiam*)(motion for out-of-time appeal was collateral proceeding); *DiCenzi v. Rose*, 452 F.3d 465, 469 (6th Cir. 2006)(in *dicta*, granting out-of-time-appeal does not restart AEDPA's limitations); *Teas v. Endicott*, 494 F.3d 580, 582-83 (7th Cir. 2007)(belated appeal granted through collateral habeas proceedings did not restart AEDPA limitations period); *O'Neal v. Kenny*, 501 F.3d 969, 970-71 (8th Cir. 2007)(grant of new direct appeal did not constitute direct review for purposes of AEDPA).

Section 2244(d)(1)(A) does ensure that the limitations period will not begin to run until the risk of altering the judgment through the usual direct-review process is exhausted through either conclusion of review by a decision of this Court or by the expiration of time for seeking such review. 28 U.S.C. §2244(d)(1)(A). Although AEDPA does not define the term "direct review," the term "direct" has been defined as "extending or moving from one place to another by the shortest way without changing direction or stopping"; "without intervening factors or intermediaries." The New Oxford American Dictionary 483 (2001). And there is nothing "direct" about an out-of-time appeal obtained through postconviction or other collateral-review proceedings. Rather, these out-of-time appeals necessarily involve intervening habeas or other postconviction proceedings and are awarded as a method of relief associated with that collateral review. *E.g.*, *O'Neal*, 501 F.3d at 970-71; *Salinas*, 354 F.3d at 430.

Further, Congress provided for anticipated exceptional circumstances in Sections 2244(d)(1)(B)-(D), by providing later start dates. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that Congress intended for § 2244(d)(1)(A) to address the exceptional circumstance that arises when an inmate learns months or years later that his direct appeal failed due to ineffective assistance of counsel. *Cf. Panetti v. Quarterman*, 127 S. Ct. 2842, 2853 (2007)(noting that "Congress did not intend the provisions of AEDPA addressing 'second or successive' petitions to govern a filing in the unusual posture presented here"). This is especially true when Congress

chose to require diligence where exceptional circumstances arise, and no such diligence is required under § 2244(d)(1)(A), and where obtaining an out-of-time appeal is dependent upon action taken by the petitioner.

Out-of-time appeals awarded through postconviction or collateral review are not part of the "direct review" process under AEDPA and cannot "restart" § 2244(d)(1)(A)'s limitations period. *See Salinas*, 354 F.3d at 430 ("If . . . an 'out of time' PDR is awarded only as a result of the collateral review process, limitations is tolled merely while the petitioner seeks to obtain that relief."); *see also O'Neal*, 501 F.3d at 970-71 (holding that a new direct appeal awarded as part of state postconviction relief did not "restart" the limitations period under § 2244(d)(1)(A)); *Teas*, 494 F.3d at 582 (holding that a belated "direct" review granted as relief on collateral review did not renew the limitations period under § 2244(d)(1)(A)).[7]

However, out-of-time appeals, being part of collateral review, toll the applicable limitations period until they are finally resolved. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d)(2); *Salinas*, 354 F.3d at 430. *Salinas*'s application of § 2244(d)(2) interprets the statute broadly to effect AEDPA's goal of comity—*i.e.*, giving the States the opportunity to address constitutional error in the first instance. *Carey v. Saffold*, 536 U.S. 214, 219-21

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[7] *But see Frasch v. Peguese*, 414 F.3d 518, 521-25 (4th Cir. 2005) (holding that an out-of-time appeal obtained through postconviction proceedings was nonetheless "direct review" for the purpose of § 2244(d)(1)(A) and "restarted" § 2244(d)(1)(A)'s limitations period); *Orange v. Calbone*, 318 F.3d 1167, 1170-71 (10th Cir. 2003) (same).

(2002)(demonstrating that reasonable reading of § 2244(d)(2) that fulfills AEDPA's purposes is preferable to a hyper-technical reading that thwarts those purposes.).

The Fifth Circuit's interpretation of § 2244(d) is consistent with AEDPA's framework and goals. It properly applies AEDPA's requirement that an inmate act promptly and diligently once he learns of his ineffective-assistance claim, thereby avoiding unnecessary delay, promoting judicial efficiency, and securing the finality of state-court judgments within a reasonable time. *See Day v. McDonough*, 547 U.S. 198, 205-06 (2006). At the same time, this reading also meets AEDPA's comity goal by tolling the federal limitations period until all state proceedings addressing the inmate's claims have been exhausted. *Duncan*, 533 U.S. at 179. And it fulfills AEDPA's goals while still allowing inmates a full and fair opportunity to obtain federal habeas review.

III. There is no compelling reason for the Court to review the Fifth Circuit's appropriate denial of a COA regarding equitable tolling where Fifth Circuit precedent assumes that equitable tolling is applicable to AEDPA's limitations period and Pietrzak failed to demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find debatable the District Court's denial of equitable tolling in his case.

There is no compelling reason for the Court to review the Fifth Circuit's denial of a COA regarding whether equitable tolling is warranted in Pietrzak's case. Pietrzak has not cited to any Supreme Court case with which the rulings of the lower court conflicts nor cases from other Circuits indicating a split on the issue of

whether equitable tolling would apply in a case such as Pietrzak's. The issue is bound to the particular facts of Pietrzak's case and would not have far-reaching effect. Further, both the District Court and the Fifth Circuit presumed that AEDPA limitations are subject to such tolling. The District Court's denial of equitable tolling and the Fifth Circuit's denial of a COA to review that determination were both correct. Pietrzak's second question presented does not merit certiorari review.

A. This case does not provide a good vehicle for the Court to determine whether equitable tolling is applicable to AEDPA's statute of limitations.

Pietrzak argues that the Court should take this opportunity to determine the important issue of whether AEDPA's statute of limitations is subject to equitable tolling. Pet. Cert. 18-20. This case, however, does not provide a good vehicle for the Court to determine that issue. Such determination would not affect the ultimate outcome of this case. The lower courts proceeded on the premise that equitable tolling *is* applicable to AEDPA's statute of limitations.

The Fifth Circuit has held that AEDPA's limitations period may be equitably tolled. *Davis v. Johnson*, 158 F.3d 806, 810 (5th Cir.1998). In this case, the Fifth Circuit denied a COA to review only the issue of whether the District Court erred in determining that equitable tolling was not warranted in this case based on the facts alleged by Pietrzak, not whether AEDPA's statute of limitations is subject to equitable tolling. Therefore, even if the Court were to find that equitable

tolling is available for prisoners who file § 2254 petitions,[8] the Court could not find that the Fifth Circuit erred in denying a COA to review the equitable-tolling issue on this basis alone. Resolution of the second question presented would require the Court to review the District Court's determinations underlying the conclusion that equitable tolling was not warranted in this particular case, on these particular facts. Such determination was correct and was not debatable.

B. The Fifth Circuit properly denied a COA on the issue of equitable tolling because Pietrzak failed to demonstrate that the District Court's ruling was debatable.

The Fifth Circuit correctly determined that the District Court's denial of equitable tolling was not debatable. Pietrzak had neither been diligent in pursuing his claims nor actively misled or prevented by some extraordinary circumstance from timely filing his federal habeas petition. The state court's order granting Pietrzak an out-of-time appeal did not purport to, and could not, dictate the manner in which AEDPA's limitations would be calculated. And both the language of the statute and federal court decisions provided notice of how Pietrzak's time limitations would be calculated:

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[8] *See Pace v. DiGuglielmo*, 544 U.S. 408, 418 n.8 (2005). In *Bowles v. Russell*, this Court recently found that statutory time limits created by Congress are not subject to equitable exceptions. __ U.S. __, 127 S. Ct. 2360 (2007). The time limits created in 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d) are statutory and were created by Congress. Consequently, although the Director did not have an opportunity to argue this in the courts below, based on this new Supreme Court precedent, the Director contends that equitable tolling is not applicable to federal habeas petitions.

that an out-of-time appeal would not restart the limitations period.

This Court has said with respect to equitable tolling in general, "[g]enerally, a litigant seeking equitable tolling bears the burden of establishing two elements: (1) that he has been pursuing his rights diligently, and (2) that some extraordinary circumstance stood in his way." *Pace v. DiGuglielmo*, 544 U.S. 408, 418 (2005).

The Fifth Circuit has explained:

> "The doctrine of equitable tolling preserves a plaintiff's claims when strict application of the statute of limitations would be inequitable." *Davis v. Johnson*, 158 F.3d 806, 810 (5th Cir.1998). Equitable tolling will be granted in "rare and exceptional circumstances," *id.* at 811, and will not be granted if the applicant failed to diligently pursue his rights, *United States v. Patterson*, 211 F.3d 927, 930 (5th Cir. 2000). "Equitable tolling applies principally when the plaintiff is actively misled by the defendant about the cause of action or is prevented in some extraordinary way from asserting his rights." *Coleman v. Johnson*, 184 F.3d 398, 402 (5th Cir.1999). "[I]gnorance of the law, even for an incarcerated pro se petitioner, generally does not excuse prompt filing." *Fisher v. Johnson*, 174 F.3d 710, 714 (5th Cir.1999).

Larry v. Dretke, 361 F.3d 890, 896-97 (5th Cir. 2004).

Thus, a petitioner cannot merely sit on his rights when some rare and extraordinary circumstance comes his way, he cannot acquiesce in or turn a blind eye to the circumstance. *Fisher v. Johnson*, 174 F.3d 710, 713 (5th Cir. 1999)(citing *Covey v. Ark. River Co.*, 865 F.2d 660, 662 (5th Cir. 1989)).

Pietrzak failed to demonstrate in his COA application that reasonable jurists would find debatable the District Court's denial of equitable tolling. He provided, almost verbatim, the argument presented to this Court. COA Appl. at 14-16. He provided no legal support for his arguments. He provided no analogous case to support that reasonable jurists would debate whether the state court's order granting an out-of-time appeal would constitute an extraordinary circumstance preventing a petitioner from timely-filing his petition. He provided nothing to support that reasonable jurists would debate whether the absence of a Circuit Court opinion stating how the statute of limitations would apply where an out-of-time appeal has been granted would constitute such an extraordinary circumstance. Pietrzak's failure to properly brief the issue by citing authority in support of his argument waived the issue. *See Ogle*, 415 F.3d at 383-84; *see also* FED. R. APP. P. 28(a)(4). Pietrzak failed to meet his burden. Thus, the Fifth Circuit did not err in denying a COA.

1. Pietrzak was neither actively misled nor prevented by some extraordinary circumstance from filing his federal habeas petition in a timely manner.

Pietrzak's argument that he was misled or prevented from filing his federal habeas petition in a

timely manner is without merit. Pietrzak argues that he was misled by the order of the Court of Criminal Appeals granting him an out-of-time appeal, understanding it to mean that his AEDPA limitations period would be reset along with his time for filing a notice of appeal in state court. Pet. Cert. at 19-20. He also argues that *Salinas* was not decided until after he had filed his second state writ application, such that his misunderstanding went unchecked. Pet. Cert. at 20.

The Court of Criminal Appeals's order granting Pietrzak an out-of-time appeal, however, did not purport to dictate the manner in which AEDPA's limitations would be calculated. In fact, the order specifically addressed only how the time limits should be calculated "[f]or the purposes of the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure." *Ex parte Pietrzak*, No. 74,173, slip op. at 1-2 (Tex. Crim. App. Sept. 19, 2001). Nor could the state court dictate how AEDPA's limitations period would be calculated. Pietrzak ignores the court's limiting clause and focuses only on the words "all time limits. . . ," without respect to the context of those words or the absence of state court authority to dictate federal law. If Pietrzak was misled, it was not by the terms of the state court's order, but by his own erroneous reading of it. However, a petitioner's legal ignorance or misunderstanding and lack of legal assistance is not a rare and exceptional circumstance entitling a petitioner to equitable tolling. *See Felder v. Johnson*, 204 F.3d 168, 170-71 (5th Cir. 2000).

Moreover, Pietrzak's reading of the state court's order was contrary to the terms of AEDPA's statute of limitations, itself. The statute provides for only one start date based on the finality of the conviction: completion of

direct review or the expiration of the time for seeking such review. 28 U.S.C. §2244(d)(1)(A). And while it provides for alternative later start dates, it does not provide for restarting the limitations period once it has already commenced. 28 U.S.C. §2244(d)(1). Instead, it provides only a provision for tolling the running of the limitations period based on pending properly-filed collateral proceedings. 28 U.S.C. §2244(d)(2).

Further, Pietrzak's argument that he is entitled to equitable tolling because the issue had not yet been decided by the Fifth Circuit is irrelevant as lack of such authority does not prevent one from filing a federal habeas petition or from acting diligently in such pursuit. *See* Pet. Cert. 19-20. He has not argued that his interpretation that the state court's order would act to restart AEDPA's limitations period was supported by any federal court decision. Pet. Cert. 19-20; 5th Cir. COA Appl. 14-16. His argument is also without merit because the issue was addressed by federal district courts in Texas and by other federal circuit courts of appeals, even in relation to out-of-time appeals, years before it was addressed in *Salinas*. *See e.g. Hernandez v. Cockrell,* No. 4:02cv720-Y, 2002 WL 31875606 (N.D. Tex. Dec. 19, 2002)(unpublished)(out-of-time PDR did not restart the limitations period); *Towles v. Dretke*, No. 4:03cv0822, 2003 WL 22952820 (N.D. Tex. Dec. 10, 2003)(unpublished)(out-of-time appeal did not restart the limitations period, but petition was timely due to equitable tolling); *Winkfield v. Bagley*, 66 Fed. Appx. 578, 582, 2003 WL 21259699 (6th Cir. 2003) (unpublished)(delayed appeal did not restart limitations period). And again, although *Salinas* addressed an out-of-time PDR and not an out-of-time appeal, Pietrzak has failed to argue how there would be any legally-relevant

reason to believe that the holding would not equally apply to Pietrzak's out-of-time appeal given the Fifth Circuit's reasoning in that case. Pet. Cert. at 20; COA Appl. at 15.

Regardless of the source of Pietrzak's misunderstanding, he was not actively misled by the State or the state court to believe that his federal limitations had been restarted by the state court's order. Neither the state court's order nor his own misunderstanding of it constitute a rare and exceptional circumstance. Nor was he prevented by the state court's order or his misunderstanding of it from timely filing his federal habeas petition.

2. Pietrzak was not diligent in pursuing federal relief for his claims.

Pietrzak is also not entitled to equitable tolling because he was not diligent in pursuing federal relief on his claims. Instead, he allowed substantial expanses of time to pass during and between multiple rounds of various state proceedings before finally filing his federal habeas petition. Pietrzak failed to demonstrate that his lack of diligence was debatable.

Pietrzak's conviction became final for the purposes of § 2244(d)(1)(A) on June 1, 1998, the day the time for seeking direct appeal expired without a notice of appeal being filed. *See* Pet. Cert., App. 6-7; *Foreman v. Dretke*, 383 F.3d at 338, 341. His time for seeking federal habeas review of his claims began to run the next day and expired one year later, on June 2, 1999.

Pietrzak was aware that his notice of appeal was untimely filed by October 26, 1999, at the latest, when the intermediate court of appeals informed him by letter that it appeared to have been filed one day late. At that point he should have been aware that his AEDPA limitations period had not only begun due to the expiration of his time for filing notice of appeal, but that it had also expired. Pietrzak does not allege, however, that he did not know and could not have discovered before the expiration of his AEDPA limitations period that his notice had been untimely filed. Neither has he indicated that he was diligent in keeping apprized of actions taken in his case to learn that his appeal was untimely. Notably, even after he received notice from the court that his appeal appeared to be untimely, Pietrzak chose to wait for the court's final determination of that jurisdictional issue (seventy days). He did this even though he was unable to provide in his briefing any argument that the notice of appeal was timely and despite the fact that diligence in seeking relief was of the utmost importance to establishing a claim for equitable tolling.

After the court dismissed the appeal for lack of jurisdiction, instead of immediately seeking an out-of-time appeal through a state habeas application, he chose to pursue discretionary review by the Court of Criminal Appeals of the dismissal of his direct appeal as untimely. In his PDR, he alleged the merits of his substantive claims, actual innocence, and ineffective assistance of counsel depriving him of an appeal (not developed in the record), none of which the Court of Criminal Appeals had jurisdiction to review through a PDR because the issues had not been determined by the court of appeals. PDR at i-ii. A PDR was not the appropriate vehicle through

which to obtain the relief he sought. The fact that he chose to seek an out-of-time appeal in an ineffective manner does not entitle Pietrzak to equitable tolling. *See Cousin v. Lensing*, 310 F.3d 843, 848 (5th Cir. 2002). Pursuing this futile action took a total of 155 days, or just over five months.

Nor was Pietrzak diligent in pursuing relief even after the state-court proceedings on his untimely-filed notice concluded. He waited 344 days, over eleven months, after his PDR was refused to file his first state habeas application, although many of the claims he raised had already been fully briefed. PDR; SHCR-01 at index. He obtained an out-of-time appeal on September 19, 2001. *Ex parte Pietrzak*, No. 74,173, slip op.

Nor was Pietrzak diligent in pursuing federal habeas relief after his out-of-time appeal had concluded. He waited 171 days, almost another 6 months, to file his second state habeas application after the court of appeals had affirmed his conviction in his out-of-time appeal. *Pietrzak v. State*, 05-01-01687-CR, slip op. (Tex. App. Dallas, Jan. 23, 2002); SHCR-02 at index. He then waited 163 days, another five and a half months, after the Court of Criminal Appeals denied his second state habeas application to file his third state habeas application and his federal habeas petition. SHCR-03 at cover, D.E. 1.

Further, although Pietrzak claims entitlement to equitable tolling based on his misunderstanding of the state court's order granting an out-of-time appeal and the lack of explicit legal authority contradicting his erroneous interpretation, not only had his limitations period expired well before he obtained the court's order, but he was not diligent in pursuing his federal habeas relief even after

there was persuasive federal Circuit precedent contradicting his erroneous understanding. At the latest, such precedent existed by May 28, 2003, over a month before Pietrzak filed his second state habeas application. SHCR-02 index; *see Winkfield v. Bagley*, 66 Fed. Appx. at 582. Yet he did not file his federal petition for over two years after that time.

Nor was Pietrzak diligent in pursuing his federal claims after the Fifth Circuit issued its decision in *Salinas*. Pietrzak filed his federal habeas petition 485 days, almost a year and a half, from the date *Salinas* was decided. This was 368 days, or just over one year, from the Supreme Court's denial of certiorari review of *Salinas* on May 3, 2004. And it was 164 days, over five months, after his second state writ was denied.

At no time did Pietrzak attempt to file a protective federal habeas petition, raising his claims and seeking equitable tolling and a stay and abatement of the proceeding while he sought to exhaust his state court remedies, an action he could have taken as early as October 26, 1999, when the intermediate court of appeals informed him that it appeared that his notice of appeal had been untimely-filed. *C.f. Rhines v. Weber*, 544 U.S. 269, 278 (2005)(sanctioning such practice with respect to mixed petitions).

Because Pietrzak failed to exercise diligence in pursuing federal habeas relief of his claims, he could not be entitled to equitable tolling which requires that the petitioner be diligent in such pursuit. The Fifth Circuit correctly determined that the District Court's denial of equitable tolling would not be debatable by reasonable

jurists, and therefore did not err in denying a COA. Certiorari review of this determination should be denied.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, this Court should grant the Director's petition for writ of certiorari.

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